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Letter dated 17 May 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to the letter delivered to your office yesterday from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland forwarding a political message from the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in relation to the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on social development.

As requested by Minister Cowen, I would appreciate if the Minister's letter and the political message could be circulated to the members of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Michael **Hoey**
Chargé d'affaires

00-44551 (E) 020600

Annex to the letter dated 17 May 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Strasbourg, 11 May 2000

It is an honour for me to communicate the attached political message from the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe through you to the General Assembly special session entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world" (Geneva, 26-30 June 2000).

In approaching our Chairmanship of the 41-nation organization, Ireland was determined to contribute to upholding the basic principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and also to assist in advancing the Council's agenda in a number of key areas. Social cohesion featured as one of the central objectives of our Chairmanship programme, aiming in particular to help promote the social development strategies being elaborated within the Council of Europe.

To further this initiative, Ireland hosted a Council of Europe Conference on Social Development in Dublin in January 2000. This meeting provided the European contribution to the Geneva special session on social development. The Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations presented the results of the Dublin Conference to the United Nations Commission for Social Development in New York. In this respect, allow me to express my satisfaction at this concrete advance in active cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations in the field of social affairs.

The Committee of Ministers looks forward to the special session in Geneva and to examining the outcome with a view to participating in international efforts to promote social cohesion and to address the challenges to social development.

I would appreciate if, for background, this letter could be circulated in association with the political message.

(*Signed*) Brian **Cowen**, T.D.
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland

Enclosure

[Original: English and French]

Towards social development for all: a European strategy based on cooperation and partnership

Political message from the Committee of Ministers to the General Assembly at its special session (Geneva, 26-30 June 2000) adopted by the Committee of Ministers at its 106th session (Strasbourg, 11 May 2000)

The Council of Europe is and remains committed to Social Development. In the five years since the Copenhagen World Summit, European countries have reaffirmed their conviction that social development provides an essential basis for the development of inclusive societies, sound economic growth and the prevention of conflict.

In line with this conviction, the Council of Europe - a pan-European Organisation bringing together 41 states united by their commitment to democracy, respect for human rights, including social rights, and the rule of law - is developing a European Strategy for Social Cohesion as one of its main priorities.

In developing and implementing this Strategy, the Council of Europe draws upon the political determination of its member states to prepare social development policies at national level aimed at promoting active participation in decision-making, fostering civic and social ties, and developing mutually supportive relationships between state, local government, public and private sectors and civil society.

The Council of Europe's Strategy for Social Cohesion aims to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the commitments undertaken at the Copenhagen World Summit. This strategy incorporates the following core elements:

Enabling environment: a common framework of social standards

The European Convention on Human Rights, as well as the relevant legal instruments of the Council of Europe in the social field, in particular the European Social Charter and Revised Social Charter and the European Code of Social Security and Revised Code, protect social rights for everybody without discrimination. Efforts to assist member states in making their legislation compatible with these instruments are being stepped up.

Despite any guarantees offered by states' ratification of legal instruments, there are various obstacles to access to social rights for many people. Therefore, the Council of Europe has set up programmes on access to housing, employment, social protection and health. In this context, particular attention is paid to vulnerable persons or groups at risk of exclusion and to children.

Initiatives aimed at poverty eradication

National strategies against poverty and social exclusion must have clear objectives, targets and monitoring mechanisms. Civil society and people suffering from poverty and social exclusion should be involved in developing such strategies. The Council of Europe has relevant experience to offer in assisting governments further develop such strategies.

The Council of Europe's campaign "Global Interdependence and Solidarity: Europe against Poverty and Social Exclusion" is one of the ongoing efforts of the Organisation to increase awareness of the importance of eradicating poverty in a world-wide context.

Initiatives to promote employment

The Council of Europe is ready to work with the European Union and relevant international organisations to encourage the development of policies to promote employment, particularly as regards access to employment by groups at risk of exclusion. The Council of Europe Development Bank has greatly increased its activity aimed at enhancing social cohesion and promoting employment; it will continue its efforts.

The promotion of social integration

Action to combat all forms of discrimination, notably on grounds of race, ethnicity, gender or age, and to promote equality and equal opportunity, is pursued vigorously by the Council of Europe and these activities will be mainstreamed into the social cohesion strategy, as well as those aimed at the social integration of migrants. Furthermore, in recognition of its competence in this field, the Council of Europe has been entrusted with the preparation of the European contribution to the United Nations' World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance.

As part of its broader commitment to the protection of minorities, the Council of Europe will continue to play a leading role in the development of policies and programmes to enable the Roma population to integrate into European societies on a basis of full equality of treatment and opportunity.

A common agenda on social development

The recent European Conference on Social Development[1] demonstrated the readiness of the Council of Europe and its member states to play an active part in social development. The conference also represented a significant advance in active co-operation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations in this field. In particular, the Council of Europe stands ready to take forward the social development agenda by:

- sharing its experience of developing and implementing standard-setting instruments in the social field with other world regions, bearing in mind the specific situation and resources of each region. To this end, the European Conference on Social Development proposed the organisation of an inter-regional forum on social standards jointly with the United Nations;

- further developing the assessment and measurement of progress in social development and facilitating the exchange of best practice. This requires effective use of indicators and benchmarks for social cohesion through appropriate co-operation between the United Nations and its agencies, the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Council of Europe;

- encourage the progressive integration of the goals of the World Summit for Social Development into social and economic development policies at national and international level;

- continuing to participate actively in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Social development is one of the essential components of this comprehensive international effort to promote peace and prosperity and prevent future conflicts in the region.

The Council of Europe will examine the outcome of Geneva 2000 with a view to participating actively in international efforts to take forward the social development agenda.

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1 The Council of Europe organised the European Conference on Social Development in preparation for the Geneva Special Session. The Conference, held in Dublin on 17 and 18 January 2000 at the invitation of the Irish Government, provided an opportunity to assess progress towards social development achieved since the Copenhagen World Summit. Among the proposals taken up in the conclusions of the Chairman of the Conference, several originated from NGOs.

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Twenty-fourth special session

Letter dated 18 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to the General Assembly at its special session entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world" the outcome of the workshops on combating corruption and community involvement in crime prevention which were conducted during the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (Vienna, 10-17 April 2000) (see annexes).

At those workshops, international experts on crime prevention elaborated valuable recommendations on the reduction of crime in the context of social development.

I should be grateful if you would have the reports annexed hereto circulated as documents of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Gerhard **Pfanzelter**
Ambassador

00-44901 (E) 120600

Annex I to the letter dated 18 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Workshop on combating corruption

1. The Workshop on combating corruption, organized by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute in cooperation with the International Scientific and Professional Advisory Council was held on 10 and 11 April 2000 within the framework of Committee II. The Workshop had before it a background paper prepared by the Institute (A/CONF.187/9) and an informal document on the proceedings of the International Conference on the theme "Responding to Challenges of Corruption", held in Milan, Italy, on 19 and 20 November 1999. The Workshop was addressed at its opening session by the Secretary-General of the Congress and Executive Director of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. The representatives of 24 Governments made statements, and 21 presentations were made by representatives of specialized governmental agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector.

2. The Workshop adopted the multidisciplinary approach advocated in the global programme against corruption, launched jointly by the Centre for International Crime Prevention and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, and considered definitions and causes of corruption, monitoring and assessment, the organized crime nexus, measures to combat corruption at the international and national levels, crime prevention, and best practices. The Workshop made recommendations concerning measures to be taken with regard to law enforcement, legislation, the private sector and civil society, as well as measures to be taken at the international level, including the promotion of debate on the possible development of a United Nations instrument against corruption. The activities at present being undertaken within the framework of the global programme against corruption were described by representatives of the Centre and the Institute.

3. There was general agreement on the importance of transparency, the independence and integrity of investigative and subsequent criminal justice processes, and strengthening the role of civil society (including the media and the private sector). Participants in the Workshop were greatly encouraged by the increased public awareness of the issue of corruption but noted that, in many countries, a great deal remained to be done, not only within the legal framework but also in the implementation of policies, in particular those concerning enforcement — for example, in raising awareness of the risk and cost of corruption to the offenders. There was agreement that general strategies to combat corruption must be adapted to the situation in particular countries.

4. The discussion highlighted the need for justice to be applied to past activities, including financial recovery of the proceeds of corruption, proper investigation, prosecution and the application of effective criminal and/or non-criminal sanctions.

5. At the same time it was considered necessary to provide appropriate prevention measures for the future, including the strengthening of civil society, decreasing the opportunities for corruption of high-level and low-level officials, improving their status and providing social rewards for those who were not corrupt

in the performance of their duties. Finally, there was need to develop a mechanism that would permit systematic feedback from anti-corruption investigations into prevention measures and best practices.

6. A possible methodology for curbing corruption was suggested. The first step should be to increase the perceived risk, costs, insecurity and degree of difficulty in engaging in acts of corruption, through, *inter alia*, targeted risk-based prevention efforts, with stricter regulation of contract-bidding and vetting procedures. As a second step, the perceived risks of corruption to the offenders should be increased through efficient and independent investigations and criminal justice processes, an approach that supplemented awareness-raising, proactive integrity testing and independent mechanisms for dealing with complaints.

7. The rewards anticipated from corruption by the offenders should be reduced by expeditious law enforcement and asset recovery.

8. Finally, any social tolerance for corruption should be reduced by the deeper involvement of independent media and civil society in anti-corruption campaigns, by rewarding those who were not corrupt and by systematically stigmatizing corrupt behaviour.

9. The participants at the Workshop stressed the potential value of drafting an international convention against corruption. It was agreed that such an instrument could be successfully implemented only if Governments were ready to provide both political support and the necessary financial resources.

Annex II to the letter dated 18 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Workshop on community involvement in crime prevention

Discussion

1. The Workshop on community involvement in crime prevention, organized by the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, was held on 12 and 13 April 2000. The Workshop had before it a background paper on community involvement in crime prevention (A/CONF.187/11). Twenty-nine panellists addressed the Workshop, followed by the representatives of 13 States, the observers for 2 non-governmental organizations and 2 individual experts.

2. The Workshop focused on two issues: (a) identification of models of best practice in community involvement in crime prevention; and (b) how States and communities could share their experiences in successful crime prevention. It was acknowledged that crime was costly both for the victims and the communities concerned, and that it affected the quality of people's lives. Every year, millions of people around the world were victims of such crime as homicide, violence against women, burglary and car theft. It was noted that the costs of crime represented 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in some developed countries and as much as 14 per cent of GDP in developing countries. To reduce the level of crime and increase the public's sense of security, a well-balanced approach between the traditional responses to crime and preventive measures that involved the community was required. Indeed, the fight against transnational organized crime could not be won if it failed to address the safety and security needs of local communities.

3. It was agreed that knowledge about the causes and risk factors associated with crime and victimization was now well developed. Many countries had established effective crime prevention programmes and policies, and promising results had been obtained in a number of projects that had been thoroughly evaluated. Many contemporary trends, however, gave rise to concern, such as the widening gap between rich and poor, exclusion of youth, the gender gap, urban expansion and the availability of firearms. Street violence and gratuitous, senseless and random violence were growing concerns that posed significant threats to society. The involvement of youth in criminal activity, both as perpetrators and as victims, was also a concern in many communities. In countries in which crime had increased significantly in recent years, the level of urban insecurity had also grown. Even where crime had diminished, insecurity and fear of crime had tended to increase, especially in urban areas. One challenge to societies was to develop sustainable responses to crime.

4. It was stated, that in devising measures of community safety, it was necessary to go beyond assessing crime figures. Responsiveness to the demands and expectations of the population by means of consultative mechanisms, victimization surveys, crime audits and action plans were also keys to mobilizing local communities. Policy development should be based on solid research, and strategies must be based on the analysis of social and urban development indicators, such as levels of unemployment, exclusion of youth, proportion of immigrants or type of housing.

5. It was emphasized that Governments and communities should work together to respond effectively to such challenges. Integrated policies that involved crime control, crime prevention and social solidarity measures were required. Inter-ministerial cooperation at the national level and the horizontal integration of partners at the local level were also encouraged. Action at the local level was viewed as the engine of prevention, since it involved the affected populations and was most attuned to local issues. In this regard, various tools had proved to be effective. These included the establishment of community councils and safety and security contracts between central and local governments. A number of speakers stated that integrated and knowledge-based approaches should involve situational, social development and community reorganization measures that targeted risk factors. Several speakers stressed that the establishment of true partnerships between key agencies and the community was a long-term process, requiring the sharing of information and power. Key lessons learned included the need for political leadership and commitment, ensuring the involvement of local officials, the need to integrate local and national strategies, and the importance of taking local concerns into account and providing proper training for practitioners.

6. It was agreed that the implementation of a comprehensive prevention strategy required new ways of thinking and organization. It was imperative that all governmental, public and private organizations concerned with human, social and economic development recognized community safety as a fundamental right, and that they integrated crime prevention into their mandates and activities. Relying on community action should not be an excuse or a mask for providing poor public services. Adequate levels of funding and support were essential elements of success.

7. Information was provided on technical cooperation projects in which Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations were involved. The activities described were aimed at both national and local governments, and ranged from the development of crime prevention manuals to the raising of public awareness. Assistance could also be made available for the formulation of strategy documents, the design and implementation of victim surveys and the collection of data for crime statistics.

Conclusion

8. A number of core issues for the involvement of the community in crime prevention were identified. It was emphasized that there were no simple or short-term solutions to the nexus of crime, victimization and insecurity, which were complex realities with multiple causes. There were, however, numerous promising crime prevention strategies and programmes that had been effective. Integrated, comprehensive and sustainable responses could be formulated on the basis of examples of good practice, such as those shared by the participants in the Workshop. Identifying key elements of successful prevention models would help to ensure their transferability and sustainability. It was agreed that such models would need to be adapted to the specific needs of interested countries and communities, bearing in mind their respective social conditions and cultural norms. There was also a need to develop more knowledge-based approaches by monitoring and evaluating ongoing initiatives, and their cost-effectiveness, and replication studies.

9. Participants in the Workshop on community involvement in crime prevention called for action in the following areas:

(a) Local communities should be recognized as the focal points for the effective delivery of crime prevention initiatives. Member States should be encouraged to implement programmes for building the capacity of communities to respond effectively to local concerns;

(b) Governments and relevant international funding organizations should be invited to provide increased financial and technical assistance to countries and communities in support of their crime prevention efforts;

(c) Anti-crime strategies in which a crime prevention policy is an integral part offer more sustainable responses to crime and insecurity problems. Governments should be called upon to intensify their efforts to identify the successful elements of effective community mobilization, and the benefits of crime prevention programmes and initiatives. Governments should cooperate in the development of a common set of indicators of community safety which could serve as benchmarks in this regard;

(d) More systematic efforts should be made to implement successful prevention actions and strategies. International support networks for crime prevention should be assigned the task of furthering the development of knowledge-based strategies, identifying elements of their transferability and making such knowledge available to communities throughout the world;

(e) The Expert Group Meeting on Community Involvement on Crime Prevention, held in Buenos Aires from 8 to 10 February 1999, identified some key elements of successful and responsible strategies to prevent and reduce crime and enhance community safety, while fully respecting human rights and the rule of law. Those recommendations should be given appropriate consideration by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Member States and all relevant entities;

(f) Member States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations and the institutes of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network should be invited to consider the present recommendations in their activities and plans of action.